WHAT YOU HAVE:

1. Information that introduces FOUR THEMES from the novel. Read this as a group and ask questions of each other if you are unsure of what the information means.
2. Information that introduces FIVE SECTIONS of chapter two. Read through this as a group and open your books to find where those sections are.
3. Instructions (three steps) to break down and analyze each of the five sections of chapter two.
4. \*A paper for each of the FIVE SECTIONS. On this paper, you will complete STEP ONE.
5. \*A paper for each of the FOUR THEMES. On this paper, you will complete STEP THREE. As you look through the instructions, you’ll see that some of the themes will have more writing on them than others since some of the sections do not fit all four themes. \*= what you’ll turn in

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

The following three steps should be repeated for each section. I suggest you split the work for step one so that you can all work at the same time. Then complete steps two and three one section at a time.

For example, after everyone has taken a section and “visualized” it, choose which section you’ll work on as a group. Time yourselves for five minutes while everyone does an individual free-write on that section. Then write the explanations of theme in that section as a team. Next, choose another section and return to step two.

**STEP ONE:** (as a group, split the work?)

VISUALIZE: Draw a picture, a map, a chart or some other kind of “sketch” to show the section.

**STEP TWO:** (individually)

EXPLORE: Ask yourself some questions, wonder, rant. Consider the connections of this section of the chapter to any of the four given themes. Do a five-minute free-write where you forget punctuation and rules and paragraphs and organization and just write ideas and thoughts and questions

**STEP THREE:** (together, as a group)

SYNTHESIZE: share your best thoughts from the free-write. Put an organized, well-written explanation of how the section fits the themes on the corresponding theme sheet (i.e., if the drunken party section fits the theme of The American Dream, write a paragraph or so that explains how and why on the theme sheet that says “The American Dream).

Some sections fit more than one theme. I think it breaks down like this:

* one section only fits one theme
* one section fits two
* two sections fit three themes
* one section touches on all four themes

It is reasonable to disagree with me, of course, but recognize that following my break-down, there are 10 explanations to be written. Even if your breakdown is not the same as mine, I’ll expect your work load to be similar.

SECTION ONE: THE valley of ashes

This is a Valley of Ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. Occasionally a line of gray cars crawls along an invisible track, gives out a ghastly creak, and comes to rest, and immediately the ash-gray men swarm up with leaden spades and stir up an impenetrable cloud, which screens their obscure operations from your sight. (Fitzgerald, 23)

Consider:

* Most readers feel the Valley of Ashes represents the people left behind by the Roaring Twenties.
* How does George Wilson seem to respond to being one left behind by the “boom” of the 20s?
* How does Myrtle Wilson respond?
* What does Tom’s treatment of both of them suggest about how the “moneyed” class sees them?

If you want more room for your “visualization,” feel free to use the back of this paper.

SECTION TWO: The Eyes of Dr. TJ Eckleburg

Consider:

* Nick focuses on the fact that the billboard is faded and falling apart.
* Fitzgerald describes the eyes as blankly keeping vigil—a descriptor he also uses to describe Gatsby’s eyes.
* George Wilson says they are the eyes of God.

If you want more room for your “visualization,” feel free to use the back of this paper.

SECTION THREE: The Drunken Party at Tom’s apartment

Consider:

* You will focus specifically on the rumors about Gatsby and Tom’s violent outburst at the end in separate sections. For this section, just look at the party itself (how it begins, who is there, what is happening, how Nick perceives it all . . . )
* How would you feel at this party? How does Nick? Who is having fun and why? Who is not—and why not?

If you want more room for your “visualization,” feel free to use the back of this paper.

SECTION FOUR: The rumors that swirl around Gatsby

Consider:

* Except for Jordan’s comment (and Daisy’s reaction) at the dinner party at the Buchanans’ and Nick’s encounter watching Gatsby that night, the rumors at the party are your first glimpse of how the world views Gatsby.
* Why are these particular people interested in him?
* Why the rumors? Who cares?
* What do the rumors all agree on?
* Looking just at these rumors, how do people see him? What do they fail to see? Why don’t they know more—or care to know more?

If you want more room for your “visualization,” feel free to use the back of this paper.

SECTION FIVE: Tom’s Violent Outburst

Consider:

* Why does Myrtle behave like this? (Do more than blame it on the a a a a a a alcohol.)
* Why does Tom respond this way?
* What does Tom’s reaction suggest?
* How do the people at the party react? Why don’t they do more to help?

If you want more room for your “visualization,” feel free to use the back of this paper.

THEME ONE: The Roaring Twenties

F. Scott Fitzgerald coined the term "Jazz Age" to describe the decade of decadence and prosperity that America enjoyed in the 1920s, which was also known as the Roaring Twenties. After World War I ended in 1918, the United States and much of the rest of the world experienced an enormous economic expansion. The surging economy turned the 1920s into a time of easy money, hard drinking (despite the Prohibition amendment to the Constitution), and lavish parties. Though the 1920s were a time of great optimism, Fitzgerald portrays the much bleaker side of the revelry by focusing on its indulgence, hypocrisy, shallow recklessness, and its perilous—even fatal—consequences. (from LitCharts)

THEME TWO: The American Dream

The American Dream—that hard work can lead one from rags to riches—has been a core facet of American identity since its inception. Settlers came west to America from Europe seeking wealth and freedom. The pioneers headed west for the same reason. *The Great Gatsby* shows the tide turning east, as hordes flock to New York City seeking stock market fortunes and questions if the American Dream has been corrupted, or if it is even attainable. Fitzgerald’s delineation of the classes in American Society also suggest his satire of the ideal of a “classless” society where everyone has access to the Dream. (modified from LitCharts)

THEME THREE: Socio-economic class

(Old Money, New Money, No Money)

The Great Gatsby portrays three different social classes: "old money" (Tom and Daisy Buchanan); "new money" (Gatsby); and a class that might be called "no money" (George and Myrtle Wilson). "Old money" families have fortunes dating from the 19th century or before, have built up powerful and influential social connections, and tend to hide their wealth and superiority behind a veneer of civility. The "new money" class made their fortunes in the 1920s boom and therefore have no social connections and tend to overcompensate for this lack with lavish displays of wealth. (from LitCharts)

THEME FOUR: The Past and the Future

Nick and Gatsby are continually troubled by time—the past haunts Gatsby and the future weighs down on Nick. When Nick tells Gatsby that you can't repeat the past, Gatsby says "Why of course you can!" Gatsby has dedicated his entire life to recapturing a golden, perfect past with Daisy. Gatsby believes that money can recreate the past. Fitzgerald describes Gatsby as "overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves." But Gatsby mixes up "youth and mystery" with history; he thinks a single glorious month of love with Daisy can compete with the years and experiences she has shared with Tom. Just as "new money" is money without social connection, Gatsby's connection to Daisy exists outside of history.

Nick's fear of the future foreshadows the economic bust that plunged the country into depression and ended the Roaring Twenties in 1929. The day Gatsby and Tom argue at the Plaza Hotel, Nick suddenly realizes that it's his thirtieth birthday. He thinks of the new decade before him as a "portentous menacing road," and clearly sees in the struggle between old and new money the end of an era and the destruction of both types of wealth. (from LitCharts)